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INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NDJAMENA 000304

SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/27/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [MOPS](#) [SU](#) [LY](#) [UN](#) [CD](#)
SUBJECT: UNSYG CONDEMNATION OF CHAD "ATTACK" ON SUDAN
INACCURATE -- AND UNHELPFUL

REF: A. USDAO NDJAMENA IIR 211518Z JUL 09
[1](#)B. NDJAMENA 292

Classified By: Ambassador Louis J. Nigro for reasons 1.4(b) and 1.4(d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) The Spokesperson for the UN Secretary General issued a statement July 20 alleging and condemning a Chadian "aerial attack" of Sudanese territory. The facts of the UN statement contradict Embassy reporting and other sources that indicate the July 16 Chadian air action against suspected Chad rebels took place on Chadian soil. We do not doubt that in so doing, Chad aircraft may have crossed briefly into Sudanese air space, much as Sudanese military aircraft operating along the border further north against suspected Sudanese rebels may cross briefly into Chad air space. We believe, however, that such UN statements, insofar as they are premature and not wholly accurate, undermine the credibility of the UN peacekeeping mission here and could feed the tensions between Chad and Sudan rather than reduce them. END SUMMARY.

THE UN STATEMENT

[1](#)2. (SBU) The UN in New York issued a July 20 statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the UN Secretary General condemning the July 16 Chadian aerial bombardment of Sudanese territory. The statement noted that the UNSYG was "disturbed by reports that bombs dropped by Chadian aircraft have struck locations in the vicinity of Umm Dkuhum in West Darfur," adding that the GOC's actions put "the lives of Sudanese civilians at risk."

ITS INACCURACIES

[1](#)3. (C) The UN statement contradicts information as to the exact nature of the July 16 events, namely:
-- Embassy Ndjamena reporting (Ref B) that the location of the bombing, whether on Chadian or Sudanese territory, was unclear July 17 with conflicting information within the GOC itself;
-- July 18 and July 21 media reports quoting the GOC as denying that the raids took place on Sudanese territory;

-- DAO Ndjamena reporting (Ref A) confirming that Chadian aircraft did not cross into Sudanese territory, not least because the Ukrainian pilots refused to do so; and
-- A MINURCAT official in N'Djamena confirming July 23 to poloff that UN officials in New York did not clear the statement with the mission headquarters in N'Djamena.

SUDAN SIMILARLY AT FAULT

¶4. (C) Despite Sudan's public denouncement of Chad's attack and the GOS letter to the UN, there was no Sudanese retaliation for the Chadian attack, with GOS officials reportedly noting that the area of Umm Dkuhum was calm after July 16. We do not doubt that in so doing, Chad aircraft may have crossed briefly into Sudanese air space, much as Sudanese military aircraft operating along the border further north against suspected Sudanese rebels may cross briefly into Chad air space. For instance, GOC and UN officials and NGOs working in Oure Cassoni, Chad's northernmost refugee camp located in close proximity to the Sudanese border, have recounted instances of overflights by Sudanese military planes and sounds of bombing in area. UN officials stressed to us that the bombings do not seem directed at Chadian territory and it is almost impossible to discern whether or not Sudanese planes actually crossed into Chadian airspace.

COMMENT

¶5. (C) The UNSYG's statement was, in our view, premature and

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not wholly accurate, especially given the lack of clarity about the location of the bombing in its immediate aftermath.

Statements like this undermine the credibility of UN's mission here and could feed tensions between Chad and Sudan rather than reduce them. At best, the statement makes the UN look as if it was purposefully misled by Sudan. At worst, the UN is unwisely contributing to the rhetoric between Chad and Sudan, which is contrary to efforts to build confidence between the two countries by SE Gration, the AU and others, including the UN itself. END COMMENT.

¶6. (U) Minimize considered.
NIGRO